

THE TIMES DISPATCH

GENEALOGICAL COLUMN

THE HARRISON FAMILY, OF VIRGINIA



There are few families, if any, in America better entitled, both by birth and by service to their country, to be considered "among the best of the broad land" than that of Harrison. Their English ancestry, though somewhat difficult to trace accurately, yet is certainly connected with the nobility of the sixteenth century, one of whose members, the celebrated inventor of the chronometer and pocket watch, Sir John Harrison, for which great service to navigation he received £20,000 from the government. He died 1782.

The name itself, like most Saxon ones, is formed by the addition of "son" to the patronymic "Harrise," meaning "son of Harris," which early became Harrison, as found in the rolls of Parliament for Yorkshire, time of Elizabeth.

The first to emigrate to America was probably Richard Harrison, who came over before 1700, though some say the first was also a Benjamin (for there were seven Benjamins), who settled at a place called "Kiskadee," in King Charles county. Certain it is the family came from Gloucestershire, England, near the town of Berkeley, seated on the Little Assen, for which the emigrant gave the name of his plantation on the James River.

Benjamin, the eldest son of Richard Harrison, was born January 25th and baptized April 27th, 1740, as recorded in Bristol Parish. He it was to build "Berkeley," the celebrated old homestead opposite City Point, which was once called "Berkeley Hundred," and a place of great importance for shipping on the north side of the river.

This first Benjamin married Annie, daughter of Robert "King" Carter, of "Berkeley," which is situated not far distant from Berkeley. From this union were ten children, six sons and four daughters. Two of the daughters and himself were killed by lightning at the same time at Berkeley. The eldest son, Benjamin, was a student at William and Mary College at the time of his father's death. Leaving college, he did not return to graduate, but managed his father's estate, which was a most extensive one.

Becoming prominent in politics, he entered the House of Burgesses, 1764, which position he held through life, becoming an eminent leader in the colony from 1774 to 1776, when he, with the Virginia delegation, signed the Declaration of Independence.

Quite an amusing incident is told of him at that great event. Being very corpulent, while Mr. Gerry, of Massachusetts, being quite slender, as Mr. Harrison raised his pen to sign the paper, he turned to that gentleman and said, "I have the advantage of you; for when the hanging time comes I will be off in a minute, while you will be kicking in the air for half an hour after I am gone."

In 1777 Mr. Harrison was made Speaker of the House of Burgesses, until 1782, when he was made Governor of the State, which he held two terms. Governor Harrison died 1791.

Gov. Harrison married Elizabeth Bassett, daughter of Colonel William Bassett, of New Kent county. She was a niece to the sister of Mrs. Washington. They left many children. Their third son, William Henry Harrison, became most prominent during the Indian war, winning the sobriquet of "Old Tippecanoe," at the battle of Miami.

Afterwards he was made Governor of the Indian and Western Territory, and in 1840 was elected President of the United States, but died a month after being inaugurated.

The Harrisons early intermarried with the distinguished Randolph family. First, by Anne, daughter of Benjamin Harrison and Ann Carter, his wife, uniting about 1725, with William Randolph, of "Wilton," grandson of William Randolph, the emigrant. From them were five children.

Their son Peyton Randolph, who was Speaker of the House of Burgesses, married, 1763, his cousin, Lucy Harrison, and their daughter, Anne, born 1740, married, 1760, Benjamin Harrison, of "Brandon," in Prince George county. In 1764 Carter Henry Harrison, of "Clifton," grandson of "King" Carter, married Susanna, daughter of Isham Randolph, third son of William Randolph, the emigrant. They had six children, namely: 1st, Robert, who moved to Kentucky, and married Anne Cabell. They were the grandparents of Carter Henry Harrison, Mayor of Chicago, Ill., 2d, Ann Harrison, married Thomas Drew, 3d, Peyton, married Elizabeth Barclay, 4th, Elizabeth, married Bradley, 5th, Randolph Harrison, of "Clifton," married his cousin, Mary Randolph, 6th, Carter Henry Harrison, Jr., died 1800.

The fourteen children of Randolph Harrison and Mary Randolph were: (1) Thomas Randolph, born 1761; married Elizabeth Cunningham, and had ten children. (2) Carter Henry, born 1762; married Jannetta Fisher, of Richmond. (3) Archibald Morgan, married, first, Kitty Hoth; second, Fanny Taylor, of Fluvanna. (4) Jane Cary; married William Fitzhugh Randolph. (5) Randolph Harrison, of "Elk Hill," Goodland, Va.; born 1769; married Miss Willis; he died 1844, leaving six children. (6) Rev. Peyton Harrison, of Baltimore; born at "Clifton," 1769; married at Richmond, 1825, Jane, daughter of Judge Dabney Call, nephew of President Jefferson and the close friend of William Wirt; from them were five children, only one of which, Harry Tucker, survived to be grown. (7) William M. Harrison, of "Clifton"; born 1802; was drowned in the Rivanna, near Edge Hill, in 1811, while attending school there, and was buried at Monticello; the singular coincidence was of his father at Clifton dreaming three times that night of seeing his son struggling in the water, and awoke in the morning to hear of its actual occurrence. (8) Mary Randolph Harrison; born at Clifton, 1804; married there, 1827, William Byrd Harrison, of Upper Brandon; they left four children—Randolph, Colonel Benjamin, who married Polly Page, and was killed at Malvern Hill, 1862; Shirley, and Dr. George Harrison, of Washington, D. C. (9) Susanna Isham Harrison; born 1806; married Rev. Samuel Blain; they moved to Kentucky. (10) Lucius Cary Harrison; born 1809; married Nelson Page, of Cumberland, Va.; their children were: Mary (called Polly), who married Colonel Benjamin Harrison, and Lucius Cary. (11) Catherine Lilburne Harrison; born 1811; married John S. McKim, of Baltimore, Md.; they had six children; many of their descendants still live. (12) William M. Harrison (called "Willie"); born 1813; married Henry Page Irving; she died at Richmond, 1847; one of their sons died in battle, 1864. (13) Virginia Randolph Harrison; born 1815; died at Richmond, 1850. (14) Nancy Harrison; born 1819; married 1847, at Upper Brandon, Dr. John Bolling Garrett, of Albemarle; they had three charming daughters.

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William M. Harrison, of "Clifton"; born 1802; was drowned in the Rivanna, near Edge Hill, in 1811, while attending school there, and was buried at Monticello; the singular coincidence was of his father at Clifton dreaming three times that night of seeing his son struggling in the water, and awoke in the morning to hear of its actual occurrence. (8) Mary Randolph Harrison; born at Clifton, 1804; married there, 1827, William Byrd Harrison, of Upper Brandon; they left four children—Randolph, Colonel Benjamin, who married Polly Page, and was killed at Malvern Hill, 1862; Shirley, and Dr. George Harrison, of Washington, D. C. (9) Susanna Isham Harrison; born 1806; married Rev. Samuel Blain; they moved to Kentucky. (10) Lucius Cary Harrison; born 1809; married Nelson Page, of Cumberland, Va.; their children were: Mary (called Polly), who married Colonel Benjamin Harrison, and Lucius Cary. (11) Catherine Lilburne Harrison; born 1811; married John S. McKim, of Baltimore, Md.; they had six children; many of their descendants still live. (12) William M. Harrison (called "Willie"); born 1813; married Henry Page Irving; she died at Richmond, 1847; one of their sons died in battle, 1864. (13) Virginia Randolph Harrison; born 1815; died at Richmond, 1850. (14) Nancy Harrison; born 1819; married 1847, at Upper Brandon, Dr. John Bolling Garrett, of Albemarle; they had three charming daughters.

One of the most interesting unions between these two noble families was that of William B. Harrison, of Upper Brandon, James River, with Ellen Wayles Randolph, born 1823, daughter of Colonel Thomas Jefferson Randolph, of Edge Hill, Albemarle. They had two children, Jane Nicholas and Jefferson Randolph Harrison. After her husband's death she resided at Edge Hill. She it was who was so instrumental in erecting the Edge Hill Chapel; indeed, both families always kept close to the "Mother Church," for we find Nathaniel Harrison, Speaker of the House of Burgesses, was a vestryman in Bristol Parish from 1707 to 1765, and Edmund Harrison, his son, vestryman, 1765, Bishop Meade, who greatly admired General William Henry Harrison, presented him in 1841, at the time of his inauguration as President, a walking cane made from a part of Washington's coach, very richly mounted and inscribed, "The President was made through Mr. Custis, of Arlington."

Another distinguished member of the Harrison family also became President of the United States—Benjamin Harrison, the grandson of President William H. Harrison, his parents moving to Ohio, where he was born in 1833. He was an eminent lawyer, moved to Indiana, and in 1861 entered the Civil War as colonel and rose to brigadier-general. In 1889 was made Senator; in 1893 was elected President of the United States, and in 1895 inaugurated. He ran for a second term, but was defeated.

Of all the many members of this illustrious family who have represented the various professions with eminence throughout the country, it would be in vain to enumerate. Their name stands high on every page of history, both in church and State, and the country owes them a large debt of gratitude for their services.

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